

First Thessalonians 1:4-10

1:4 Their election was certainly evident by their gospel conversion and spiritual fruitfulness.

- A. Contrary to popular belief, the evidence of their election is not in verse five, for the fifth verse rather defines God's miraculous and spiritual blessing on Paul's ministerial labor.
- B. The evidence of their election has been given (1:3) and will be further defined (1:6-10).
- C. Election can be known by one's self and by others, which leads us to several thoughts.
 - 1. The down-in-the-mouth false humility of doubting Thomases is vain ignorance.
 - 2. It is a Pharisaical lie that says, "You cannot see my heart or the Book of Life."
 - 3. The heart is known by its fruits - exceptions are miracles of grace (II Pet 2:7-9).
 - 4. We should make our own calling and election sure (II Pet 1:5-10; I Tim 6:19).
 - 5. And we should be prepared to reject strange children (Ps 144:11; I Cor 11:19).
- D. Is the prepositional phrase "your election of God" subjective- or objective-genitive?
 - 1. Objective-genitive means the object of the preposition is the object of the action, which in this case would be the Thessalonian's electing choice of God, which is the universal fable of salvation in this effeminate and profane generation. If God's election is conditional on faith and obedience, the heresy is the same.
 - 2. Subjective-genitive means the object of the preposition is the subject of the action, which in this case would be God's electing choice of the Thessalonians, which is the message of the entire Bible, where God has created man for His own glory and chosen some to display His glorious grace in the free gift of eternal life, rejecting others to show His wrath and power (Romans 9:22-24).
- E. Paul certainly loved them, so they could properly be said to be brethren beloved in that sense; but election brings us forcibly to consider God's love for them (II Thess 2:13).
- F. It is just as blasphemous to say God loves all men as to say He loves Satan's demons.
 - a. Such fables from hell destroy the incredible glory of God's love for His elect (Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:4-6; 2:1-7; 5:25-27; Romans 5:6-10; 8:29-39; 9:15; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 12:5-8; I John 4:10,19).
 - b. Such fables from hell destroy the incredible wrath of God against the wicked (Psalm 5:5; 10:3; 11:5; Habakkuk 1:13; Matt 7:23; Revelation 17:8b; 20:15).
 - c. So the elect are brought to sadness and the wicked supported to evil (Eze 13:22).
 - d. Where is the God of Nahum, Paul, and John (Na 1:2-10; Ro 9:10-24; Re 19:15)?

1:5 The Lord confirmed the gospel at Thessalonica with miraculous signs and the Holy Spirit.

- A. When Paul and companions first arrived, they had more than just fair speeches; and so they gently remind them of their apostolic authority as they review their conversion.
- B. Jesus sent His apostles with powerful gifts to confirm their preaching (Mark 16:14-20; Acts 2:1-21; 10:44-46; 11:15-18; 14:3; 19:1-7,11-12; Romans 15:18-19; Heb 2:1-4).
 - 1. The power here listed is the ability to perform miraculous signs and wonders.
 - 2. The Holy Ghost here listed is the ability for inspired prophecy and other gifts, including the visible demonstration of giving gifts to others (Acts 8:14-17).
 - 3. The assurance here listed is the cumulative evidence that God had sent them, including their ministerial character in combination with the gifts of the Spirit.
- C. This verse, rather than describing the hearers' response, as many believe, is describing the powerful presentation of the gospel by God's specially anointed men, which clearly demonstrated that these were not ordinary men, but rather gifted ambassadors of God.

D. The key is recognizing the explanatory clause at the end of the verse, which identifies the nature of the presentation rather than the nature of the reception of it. The combination of miraculous signs, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and reassuring conduct was very important.

1. Rather than using any deceit in their presentation, they preached honestly (2:3).
2. Rather than using any uncleanness like the pagans, they preached holily (2:3).
3. Rather than using any guile to manipulate them, they preached sincerely (2:3).
4. Rather than using any play for popular approval, they preached in fear (2:4).
5. Rather than using any flattering words, they preached truthfully (2:5).
6. Rather than using any ministry for moneymaking, they preached freely (2:5).
7. Rather than using their power to obtain glory, they were meek and modest (2:6).
8. Rather than using their power to dominate, they were gentle as nurses (2:7-8).
9. Rather than using their power for gain, they worked hard (2:9; II Thess 3:7-9).
10. Rather than using their power for liberty, they exemplified great holiness (2:10).

1:6 The Thessalonians obeyed the gospel in spite of persecution but with Holy Spirit comfort.

- A. Here is the response or effect of the gospel by the Thessalonians, not that in verse five.
- B. Ministers are to be examples of following the Lord (II Thess 3:9; I Cor 11:2; Phil 3:17).
- C. The much affliction was the riot created by the unbelieving, envious Jews (Acts 17:5-9).
- D. But the gospel also brings joy of the Holy Ghost for true believers (Rom 5:13; 14:17).

1:7 The Thessalonians' conversion and faith was a wonderful example to all those in Greece.

- A. Macedonia in the north and Achaia in the south were the two parts of modern Greece.
- B. An example of full conversion, faithfulness in affliction, and spiritual joy helped others.
- C. The gospel is best testified by complete conversion, patience, and joy.

1:8 The Thessalonians spread the gospel powerfully by their living faith rather than by word.

- A. Rather than missionary programs, which are not taught in the epistles, the gospel went forth from Thessalonica by the faith, obedience, patience, joy, and hope of these saints.
- B. The report of their faith was so complete and powerful in its testimony that Paul had nothing more to say when coming to other cities in that part of the world. Glory!
- C. The Lord's evangelistic work for saints is perfect lives rather than leaving gospel tracts.
 1. When the formerly foolish become wise, others take notice.
 2. When the formerly lascivious become holy, others take notice.
 3. When the formerly cruel become gentle, others take notice.
 4. When the formerly ambitious become contented, others take notice.
- D. Ministers are to be examples for sure (I Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7-8; I Pet 5:3), but so can saints.
- E. The witness of example is clearly taught (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:15; I Pet 2:9,12; 3:1,15-16).

1:9 Both believers nearby and far away could recount the glorious conversion of these saints.

- A. The ministerial success of Paul and his companions was well known even to details.
- B. And the conversion from idolatry to serve the living and true God was also well known.
- C. What are the individual and collective reputations of our lives known by others?

1:10 The great hope of the Thessalonians in the coming of Jesus Christ was also well known.

- A. These saints had lost their affections and hope in this life and were waiting for Jesus.
- B. And this glorious returning Son, Paul reminds them, died for us and rose again to save us from the horrific judgment of God that will come upon the world.

- C. Paul mentions the Lord's second coming in these two epistles more than in all others combined (I Thess 1:9-10; 2:19; 4:13-18; 5:1-11,23; II Thess 1:7-10; 2:1-8; 3:5).